



Contractors & Tradesmen Working Outdoors

What to Do if You Find Vermiculite and Asbestos Around a Home or Business

Environmental Resource Specialist – (406) 291-5335

EPA Information Center - 501 Mineral Avenue, Libby, MT 59923 - (406) 293-6194

DEQ Troy Information Center – 303 N. Third St.; Troy, MT 59935 – (406)-295-9238

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Vermiculite in Libby



For several decades, vermiculite was commonly used in and around homes in Lincoln County for a variety of applications, including as a soil additive, construction aggregate, and attic insulation.

If vermiculite is present, it might contain Libby Amphibole asbestos (LA), which may be more toxic than other varieties. Exposure to LA could lead to such serious diseases as asbestosis, lung cancer, and mesothelioma. It will take several years for EPA to complete the cleanup, and workers might encounter vermiculite during that time, even after EPA has finished its work. It is not possible for EPA to remove (or to even know about) *all* the vermiculite in the area. In some cases, vermiculite might be intentionally left in sealed walls, home foundations, and other relatively inaccessible areas. Construction, remodelling, or landscaping involving digging might uncover vermiculite either before or after EPA cleans the property.

Always ask the homeowner if they know where buried vermiculite might be. EPA might have information on the property based on the investigation, design, and cleanup that has been completed. When calling EPA, you will need to provide the address, location of the work, and the likely depth of excavation.

It is possible that you might unexpectedly find vermiculite after starting your work, perhaps by uncovering it while doing any major outdoor project. EPA strongly cautions you not to disturb it in any way that might cause Libby Amphibole asbestos to become airborne.

Precautionary Steps to Take So You Can Get On With Your Job

If you encounter vermiculite, it is likely that you will be exposed to Libby Amphibole asbestos. If you choose to continue working, take the following minimal steps:

1. **Always notify the resident.** If they haven't already told you about it, they may not know.
2. **Stop work to assess the volume** of vermiculite. Cover or wet down the material, if possible.
3. **For a small quantity** of vermiculite, such as a very isolated area or a few random flakes, EPA recommends you wet it and try to work around the area. **If possible, leave it alone.** If the material is at depth, leave it there. It's better to have it buried than at the surface.
4. **For larger quantities** of vermiculite such as when it was used as fill around pipes, around other structures, or as bulk fill (you may have sparkling soil) **do not to disturb the material – call the Environmental Resource Specialist (ERS) immediately.**
5. **No matter the volume or location of known or suspected vermiculite, contact the ERS. Libby, Lincoln County, and EPA are considering a formal notification requirement. Please notify us early to protect yourself and your workers and to ensure the most appropriate action is taken.**



Raw and Popped Ore

Libby Amphibole asbestos might be considerably more toxic than other commercial asbestos products. It should be avoided or handled with extreme care. . Exposure to Libby Amphibole asbestos has resulted in disease in workers and non-workers who have had contact with contaminated materials. Take care not to bring any contaminated clothing or material back to your home or business. Treat any asbestos containing material as regulated material and comply with all state and local regulations. There is no known threshold risk level for asbestos-related materials, and any exposure will increase the risk of asbestos-related disease. The health risk from exposure to **all** asbestos depends greatly on the amount of asbestos in the material you are disturbing and how long the exposure lasts. If you take the basic precautions outlined in this fact sheet, work on your project will be much safer.

Common dust or surgical masks are not effective against asbestos fibers! Wearing a respirator with a HEPA filter is the best way to avoid breathing asbestos fibers. However, they must be used properly or exposure may still occur. For information on respirator requirements, visit OSHA's website: www.osha.gov/SLTC/respiratoryprotection.



Who Can I Contact With Questions About Asbestos?

EPA Information Center - (406) 293-6194
DEQ Troy Information Center – 295-9238
ERS – (406) 291-5335

EPA, the ERS, or DEQ may send personnel out to inspect a situation involving vermiculite or Libby Asbestos. That guidance might include advising the owner to allow EPA or a licensed asbestos contractor or inspector to take samples, conduct cleanup, or take other special measures to reduce the risk of asbestos exposure. A list of licensed inspectors and contractors can be found at the Information Centers.

Montana Department of Environmental Quality -
Asbestos Control Program (406) 444-5300

Montana law requires that employers hire a licensed inspector to determine if asbestos is present before doing any work. Asbestos that is not associated with the Libby vermiculite mine is still regulated by Montana DEQ. If non-Libby asbestos is found, it should be dealt with according to Montana regulations. Visit Montana DEQ's Asbestos web site at: www.deq.mt.gov/Asbestos

Please learn about the risks of asbestos exposure and basic precautions by reviewing the fact sheets available at the **Information Centers** or the website listed below:

- **HEPA Vacuum Cleaner Program** – *May 2007*. Provides information on the effectiveness of HEPA vacuums and describes their role in Libby's cleanup.
- **Lincoln County Do-It-Yourselfers** – *June 2007*.
- **Contractors & Tradesmen Working Indoors** – *June 2007*.
- Explore the EPA web site and its links at: www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/libby